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ABSTRACT

Developing a strong set of moral values in the adolescent student through school curriculum and other contacts is discussed. The physical and emotional characteristics of the adolescent from the age of 13 through 16 are outlined, and typical behaviors in home and school for each age are described. The focus of this discussion is upon developing honesty and a sense of responsibility in young people at this stage of development. Specific books suitable to the different ages are suggested as helpful in augmenting the goals of the teacher in clarifying a moral viewpoint toward real life situations. (JD)

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TEACHING VALUES THROUGH THE USE OF BOOKS

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

Mary Smith, a fourth grade teacher, had just returned to Cedar Elementary School following a two year maternity leave of absence. She was assigned to Cedar Middle School, since no vacancy existed at the elementary school. The middle school had been newly created within the system during a reorganization of the entire school program. Many of the students in her classes at the middle school were to be the same students she had previously taught in the fourth grade. She was delighted with the prospect of seeing them again and with the chance to teach only her favorite subject area, mathematics. After three weeks in the new school, she went to the principal almost in tears.

"I don't understand! Three years ago before I went on leave, my students were trusting, lovable, eager to learn and working with them was absolutely a pleasure. Now they are hostile, awkward, socially abrasive, and just impossible in the classroom. I hardly have time to teach mathematics because it takes all my time just keeping some semblance of order. I must be a complete failure as a teacher. What is the matter with me?"

The principal assured his new teacher that she was probably more successful than she realized and reminded her that she had been away from teaching during some critical developments. He advised her to do some reading on the rationale of the middle school and on the process and problems of adolescence.

"One of the problems which we have not yet solved in this school or in any school I know about is how to help these students develop themselves a philosophy of life," he added. "I know that sounds rather stilted and formidable a task, but we shall be failing these young people if we do not provide some way for them to observe the values which various people have and to formulate their own values. Of course, we must do this without the religious beliefs and connotations which moral principles have employed in the

past. If you or any of the other teachers can help them toward a set of values, this school will be better and some of your problems will disappear."

Mary Smith remembered that all of the original teachers at Cedar Middle School had been picked for their experience. They were all people who could probably be flexible and who could relate to the problems of young people. During the first year of school, she had been told, inservice meetings were held regularly as the programs expanded. Specialists in the middle school concept had been invited to meet with the faculty and to help with problems as they emerged. She had apparently met the criteria for teachers selected for the middle school, but she had missed the preparation which others had enjoyed.

Encouraged by the understanding of the principal, Mary Smith decided to try to make up for missing the in-service experience by reading and by talking over her problems and frustrations with some of her colleagues.

Thousands of teachers of young adults share Mary Smith's concerns and difficulties. Many of these teachers simply fail to recognize and understand the great changes which occur during the period between the innocence of childhood and the sophistication of adulthood. The successful teacher of young adults is the one who is aware of the tremendous physiological and emotional changes which take place and who understands how to deal with the special problems of students in this age group.

The situation described above clearly illustrates an occurrence that is taking place everywhere. The young people in Mary Smith's classes did not change because they wished to be different or because they wished to cause her any difficulties. In fact, they probably liked and respected her. The change came about because of the normal maturation process. A sharp increase in hormone production coupled with rapid spurts of growth caused new

demands upon systems which may have been unprepared at the time for such stress. Sudden growth in the limbs may have caused the clumsiness and awkwardness that young people often find hard to accommodate and to understand. The uncertainty and confusion in their minds about what was and is happening to them may have caused the negative reactions which she saw displayed through various behavior problems and social maladjustment.

Although the external characteristics of adolescence were identified as long as forty years ago by psychologists, little was done in the educational process to meet the needs of adolescence. The rise of the middle school reflects an effort on the part of school systems to respond to viewing the young people as "small adults" or merely as future high school students, they are now considered to be a group in transition. The middle school represents a concerted effort currently being made by many educators to meet the physiological, social, biological, and emotional needs during these difficult years of adjustment.

As middle schools are established, special attention is usually given to providing for orientation to the concept for parents, teachers, and administrators and for comprehensive planning of the program. The concern of the entire community for the preparation of its youth for citizenship and adult life can be directed and promoted through interest in a new middle school.

The age at which young adulthood occurs has dropped during the last two decades from an average age of sixteen years to an average age of thirteen; Therefore, problems must be faced sooner. The problems with which the sixteen year old youth had trouble coping must now be met by a thirteen year old who has had even less experience in living. The reduction has been caused, in part, by some easily identifiable factors. The improved nutrition which young children receive speeds their growth and development. A significantly higher standard of living further increases the chance of early maturity. The greater mobility of young people has resulted in a wider choice of friends

and a wider choice of partners in marriage or other social arrangement. The greater freedom and the interplay of genetic factors also seem to have hastened the maturity of young people.

Adolescence is a time of paradox. The adolescent has the personality of a child in the body of an adult. The youth has a need to be loved but a burning desire to be independent. The need to be self-directing exists with little or no idea of the direction to take. Directly related to the conflict are the strong physical and sexual powers which the youth feels developing inside the body. The lack of knowledge and experience in how to use these powers causes mistakes and frustrations.

When the adolescent is placed in a society where the goals are essentially incomprehensible and unattainable and where concerns are apparently misplaced and insincere, it becomes obvious why this time of life is a period of emotional turmoil. The need for a value system is imperative if the young person is to adjust to some existing conditions, to decide upon a satisfactory life style, to set goals, and to cope with life's pressures.

At this point it will help us to understand the adolescent by examining the psychological and physiological characteristics of the thirteen, fourteen and fifteen-year-old. Each age is radically different. The thirteen-year-old may display a different behavior at home than he/she does at school. At home he/she tends to go through periods of silence and musing. At school he/she acts very interested in his/her schoolwork. He/she participates in class discussions and is very eager to learn through reading, listening, and looking. He/she is dependable and has a sense of duty. The adolescent may worry about his problems, and there may be fear that he/she is not liked by all his peers.

The fourteen-year-old displays a change in his/her behavior. He/she is happier around home. He/she may sing and express his/her feelings. He/she has a better orientation to himself/herself and to his/her interpersonal

environment. He/she usually enjoys life and is very outgoing both at home and school. He/she exhibits more interest in his/her family. He/she now is able to perceive how others feel about things and how others view him/her. The fourteen-year-old is aware that people are different from one another. He/she likes to reason and is capable of independent thinking. The fourteen-year-old is not as fond of school as he/she was the year before. He/she seems to be happier away from school.

The fifteen-year-old is frequently indifferent and may give an impression of apathy. His/her feelings are fashioned through growth and experience. He/she has an increase in self-awareness and independence. His/her independence is immature. He/she may turn away from his/her parents in hopes of attaining a greater degree of independence. He/she likes to engage in social gatherings with his/her friends of both sexes.

The sixteen-year-old is known as a pre-adult. He/she tends to take life as it comes and is more tolerant of the world in general. He/she is very fond of his/her relationships with both males and females. His/her relationships have improved within the family where there seems to be a greater understanding of each other. He/she is a dependable person and many in this age group hold down a job during the summer and the school year.

The case for developing a strong system of values through the school curriculum or through some other contact is obvious. Whether or not there are any universal, nonarbitrary moral principles or whether moral value is dependent upon the culture makes little difference. The adolescent needs the opportunity to sample various values and to develop the system which will best suit the selected goals and lifestyle. Guidance, not pressure or coercion, is needed in the process.

The need for moral education has come into focus recently in educa-

tional literature. Such publications as the *Kappan, Today's Education,* and other equally prestigious periodicals have devoted whole sections or issues to the question of moral education. Perhaps this phenomenon has been caused by a series of national events such as "Watergate," the bribery of foreign officials by major U. S. industries, and the current Korean scandal in Congress. Some people may feel that the absence of some kind of religious observance in school is responsible. However, the basic cause probably is the obvious need of young people and those who work with them for assistance in the typical problems of adolescence.

While the schools have backed away from a direct attempt to affect the moral thinking and behavior of students, the social expectations remain in the minds of many people. They believe the school must analyze the complex social structure and offer moral education in the curriculum.

The paper will focus on honesty and responsibility for the welfare of others and discuss how books may be used to teach these values.

Honesty means not lying, stealing, or cheating. It also means that a person has integrity and that relationships with others are real and genuine.

Dishonesty is as old as time itself and is practiced everywhere in the world. Because one dishonest act or word usually requires another to cover the disception, dishonesty may become habitual -- almost a reflex action. Some authorities and educators see lying and other forms of dishonesty as an index to a child's perception of his or her acceptance. Since unloved children feel inadequate, they deliberately tell falsehoods to attract attention.

Honesty is really a confusing concept to many adolescents. The social and cultural mores of American society foster a certain amount of dishonesty. For example, the general consensus seems to be that it is acceptable to cheat on your income tax, if you do not get caught. Dishonesty can seem legitimate to an adolescent when a book entitled *The Complete Alibi Handbook* provides the reader with a variety of excuses, lies, or alibis on how to escape various un-

pleasant social situations. Parents do not realize that they are encouraging confusion about honesty when they ask children to tell telephone callers that they are not home. The image which a person builds or buys may seem more important to the adolescent than the character which is inside.

The young child may well be dishonest only to make reality over to conform to what seems to be a more desirable state of affairs. Dishonesty of this kind can be ignored, because it will probably be outgrown. However, an adolescent must learn to accept reality, to conform to the mores of the social group or community -- or to defy them --, and to develop an individual set of values. The teen years are critical in the development of honesty.

Developing Honesty

Teachers and other people who work with youth can not often influence the early lives of their charges. Often they must cope with the young people without knowing all of their background and problems. By the time children have reached middle school, dishonesty in all its forms can no longer be ignored as childish behavior. The school must do something to reinforce positive behavior, to influence those who are occasionally dishonest, and to try to change those who have real problems in dishonesty.

While occasional dishonesty in small children is not serious, constant lying and retreating into fantasy should be a matter of concern to parents. At the age of ten, most children seem to be usually truthful, to feel that cheating is bad, and to deplore stealing. However, by age sixteen, adolescents readily admit to being partially truthful, to be willing to cheat on examinations, and to believe that stealing is not too serious a problem. During the critical years of the early teens when the concepts of honesty are being formed, young people can be influenced.

The paramount factor for young people seems to be self-honesty. They must not lie to themselves. In extreme cases, adolescents become so dishonest

with themselves that unhealthy fantasy develops and reality completely escapes them. Parents, teachers, and media specialists should all be aware of this danger, so that professional referral can be made before these young people wreck their lives.

By the time they reach middle school, most young people understand the concepts of lying, cheating, and stealing. They will have difficulty, as many adults do, in honestly facing daily social conflicts. Teaching about honesty and helping young people develop it is not a simple task.

Perhaps a three step approach can be used, although all three steps really need to occur at once. First, the individual must learn to be honest with himself. For example, the boy who habitually says he does not have time for assignments can be shown where in his daily schedule he is wasting time which could be used for school work.

Next, the adolescent should develop some understanding of the complexity of social values and norms. These commonly accepted ideas of the desirable and the undesirable elements are vital ingredients of the culture. The study of history, economics, and social institutions, which is a part of every school curriculum and be used to explore values and their place in society.

Lastly, the young people must learn to reconcile the conflicts between society's values and their own. One danger is that adults of today tend to reward what they want to hear rather than honesty. For example, a fifteen year old boy told his mother that he disliked his grandfather because of personal hygiene problems. The mother scolded the boy. As a result, the boy turned to saying what would please his mother and became a good liar.

Books can be an ideal tool in helping young people develop the values which will govern their own lives. Adults should permit free discussion of the ideas in the books, refraining from pointing out or emphasizing their own values. They will be surprised how often the outcome will favor traditional

values.

Books for Developing Honesty

By now it should be obvious that all of the values young people need to develop to be mature and responsible adults are interrelated. For this reason, teachers and media specialists may choose values to begin emphasizing with the assurance that other values will be included in the process.

Dishonesty in its various forms is a part of many books for young people. Some of the books already mentioned in preceding chapters will also be useful here. A few books are mentioned under honesty, but others will readily come to mind which may be better suited to a particular individual or group.

For the less mature readers, especially the girls, a good place to start can be *Freaky Friday* by Mary Rodgers. Annabel is an example of a girl who is not honest with herself. She refuses to see her situation as it really is until one Friday when she finds herself in her mother's body. The account of that "freaky" day is hilarious. Annabel gladly becomes herself again, but she learns to see her family, her friends, and herself as they really are. This book is excellent to show adolescents that, to establish their own identity, they must ask and answer the question, "Honestly, who am I?"

Anne Alexander's book *To Live a Lie* is a very readable story which shows clearly how one lie is only the beginning of a whole web of untruths. Noel Henning changed her name to Jennifer and said her mother was dead when she entered a new school. She even wished her mother really was dead. The book is very realistic, since it does not end with a reconciliation of the mother and father. Instead, Noel learns to accept the separation and divorce, to realize that she is loved by both parents, and to be truthful with her friends.

Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* considers a more serious matter related to honesty. When a black man in a small Alabama town is accused of rape, Jean Louise Finch's father defies tradition for those days to defend the man against false charges. Dishonesty becomes deadly serious in this book. Although written for general adult reading, *To Kill a Mockingbird* has been considered to be one of the most useful books in developing values in young people.

Another book for the more mature readers is *The Learning Tree* by Gordon Parks. The story deals with one year in the life of Newt Winger in a small Kansas town. Newt learned the need for honesty in his actions and in his relationships with others. A frightening situation in which he finally told the truth in spite of danger to himself showed him that even communities can slowly change for the better.

Responsibility For The Welfare of Others

Apathy toward other people was brought into sharp focus several years ago when a young woman was raped and murdered in a New York parking lot while neighbors looked on. For various reasons they simply refused to become involved. The story was carried by most news boradcasts and published in detail by newspapers and magazines. Later a motion picture describing the incident was aired on a major television network.

People everywhere were appalled that such a thing could have been allowed to happen. Many churches and lay groups started campaigns to convince people that they must help those who need emergency assistance and that all people are responsible for other human beings.

The reasons for the lack of concern are many. Family units tend to be smaller today. Children do not have the experience of looking after younger brothers and sisters or of helping their neighbors. The changed atmosphere is partly responsible for the locked doors, the fear of dangers, and the isolation from others. The sad truth is that crime and the fear of

crime are changing the nation's lifestyle.

However, not all of the lack of responsibility for others can be attributed to crime. People seem to be too busy to notice the problems of another and too apathetic to care when they do notice. Recent legal interpretations of responsibility have discouraged some people from helping others. Too many incidents have happened when a doctor or other well-meaning citizen has helped an accident victim only to be sued by the victim or his family. Lawsuits brought by people against their friends for alleged injuries make property owners fear not to carry liability insurance.

Children must be taught very early to lock their possessions, not to talk to strangers, and to be suspicious of others for their own protection. Feeling responsible for someone else is a concept which needs to be promoted in children at the same time. Educators complain that today's students are apathetic about others. It is no wonder when young people are rarely taught to care about others either at home or at school. The need to care for others is obvious. The school is certainly one important place to help reconcile the concepts of fear and involvement and to assist the development of mature responsibility for others in young people.

Teachers and other people who work with adolescents must always be careful not to say or to imply that parents are wrong in the way they deal with their own children. In developing responsibility for the welfare of others, this warning is especially important. The parents have probably already had difficulty in reconciling their own early training and the realities of life today. They constantly read and listen to the warnings that children must be taught to protect themselves by keeping away from people.

School is the place where most children become truly socialized. For that reason, schools should include in the curriculum constant attention to see that children develop concern for their classmates. They need to understand the difference between tattling and sharing some necessary bit of

information with a teacher. By the time they reach middle school, students should be concerned about people outside the school, the community, and the nation. All children and young people must also learn the rules of personal safety. The regular channels of social studies, sciences, literature, family living, and driver education can be used to develop responsibility.

Schools may not be doing enough in the area of showing young people where to go to get help for people with specific needs. When they learn various media skills, they should also learn that agencies exist for assistance with most problems which are beyond solution by an individual.

Special attention should be given to the development of concern for the mentally retarded citizens and for those with birth defects, emotional problems and physical handicaps. The current emphasis on laws to protect the handicapped, the older worker, and woman can be used to develop the feeling of responsibility for others. Young people should learn when to help, how to help, and how to treat special people.

While no book can take the place of real living, reading and discussion of books can have an important role in building mature responsibility for others. Young people can experience only a limited number of situations and relationships in real life. However, through books they can have many and varied vicarious experiences which will help them reconcile the ideas of respect for personal safety and concern for others.

Books for Developing Responsibility for Others

A few books are suggested here from the many which can be used to help develop responsibility for the welfare of others.

For the younger reader, Rose Blue has written *Grandma Didn't Wave Back* about a problem seldom treated in literature for young people. Ten year old Debbie has to learn the meaning of senility as she sees her beloved grandmother progress toward the inevitable end. She finally accepts the illness, realizes

that her grandmother is better off with the constant care of a nursing home, and turns toward her own life as her grandmother would have wanted her to do. True concern means trying to do what is best for others--with love.

Betsey Byars in *The Summer of the Swans* has written a very touching story in which Sara shows unusual concern and affection for her mentally retarded brother. Through the crisis of Charlie's being lost overnight in a ravine, Sara gains a better understanding of herself and takes several steps toward maturity.

A more mature book is *Nobody Waved Goodby* by Elizabeth Haggard. There is no happy ending to this story of a young man who constantly refused to accept responsibility for anything or anyone. Peter tried to be a sophisticated adult as he took cars without permission, drove without a license, stayed out until 4:00 A. M., took merchandise from stores, drank beer and rebelled against authority in many ways. When he finally decided to leave home for a better life, he did it with stolen money, a car not his own, and a pregnant girlfriend. When Julie refused to go with him, nobody was left to wave goodbye as he headed toward certain trouble.

It is much more difficult to care about those human beings who are grotesque in appearance and movement. *Tell Me You Love Me Junie Moon*, by Marjorie Kellogg, portrays characters of that kind. The first page of the book introduces the reader to Junie Moon with her horribly disfigured face and body, to the paraplegic Warren, and to Authur with progressive neurological disease. These three meet in a hospital and agree that it will be to their mutual benefit to live together after they are discharged. The story illustrates the lack of concern that ordinary people have for such unfortunate human beings and the bonds of mutual concern which develop in this "family." Another book which provides insights into the lives of those who are physically and psychologically disabled by handicaps is *Three Legged*

Race by Charles P. Crawford.